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Immigrant Identities: U.S. Intervention and the American Dream in Central America

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS
in
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

By **Madeline Linn**
April 20, 2018

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

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Immigrant Identities: U.S Intervention and the American Dream in Central America

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University of San Francisco

April 20, 2018

Master of Arts in International Studies

Abstract

This thesis explores the ways in which U.S. intervention in Central America has been a contributing force to out-migration. Moving away from the conventional lens of migration studies, this thesis attempts to bridge a connection between the imposed construct of the American dream and the early implementation of U.S. neoliberal policy to measure a shift in immigrant identity. The historical antecedents of U.S./Central American relations are explored in order to trace the earliest moments of intervention in the physical sense. Discourse analysis is utilized to track the ways in which a ‘good life’ narrative and benchmarks of ‘success’ have been injected into the very fabric of Central American society. This thesis is three-fold in that it employs historical, discourse, and data analysis to draw conclusions about the various layers of immigrant identities, specifically the changes between multiple generations. Interviews were conducted with Central American immigrants to support these three methods.

Key Terms: U.S economic hegemony, Neoliberalism, Migration, Identity Politics, Central America, Immigrant Identity

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Chapter One: Introduction

In today's world, it is no secret that every part of our intricate societies are speeding up, changing and evolving. This is evident in the global economy, politics and the ever-increasing entanglement of social networks. With this acceleration and increased importance placed on the capitalist market, our human identities have become bound up with the desire to consume. The steady growth of neoliberal capitalism--or the emergence of a globally connected marketplace built on the foundation of competition and free trade--has allowed for the development of a "consumerist fundamentalism" to take form. A term coined by Lisa Rofel to explain, "The belief that consumption in the market is going to answer people's basic human dilemmas, desires or needs" (Rofel 2008, 1). Reflecting on this term and Rofel's analysis of China in the post-socialist era, I relate her overarching idea of consumption and this "consumerist fundamentalism" term to Central America. More specifically the ways in which the infiltration of American dream rhetoric and U.S. intervention have given rise to "neoliberal desire" which in turn has influenced immigrant identities and contributed to migration to the United States.

While migration is amply debated in the scholarly literature, I would like to examine the ways in which physical manifestations of neoliberal capitalism have contributed to the creation of a "new immigrant" filled with new desires and motivations as compared to previous generations. Along with this idea I will outline the various actors/events involved in this change in identity including: Alliance documents implemented by the U.S. in Central America, American dream rhetoric employed through various methods, constructed manifestations of capitalism and the interventionist legacies left behind in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua. More specifically I strive to answer the question; How has U.S. economic hegemony and political intervention in Central America played a role in constructing immigrant identities?

When I use the term U.S. economic “hegemony” I am referring to the dominant economic doctrine backed by the United States: Neoliberalism. For the purposes of this study “U.S. hegemony” encompasses the United States’ dominant role within the global marketplace as the purveyors of neoliberalism (defined in Key terms). This hegemonic force (a neoliberal United States), therefore, has the ability to take several shapes. There are concrete examples of its penetration within the global marketplace but even more pervasive is the embedded ideology that has been dispersed to societies around the world.

In the scope of my study, observing how this ideology has infiltrated Central American society will allow us to critically examine how it has and will continue to alter immigrant identities. Looking at this in two ways, what that ideology is, how it has been crafted, as well as the vehicle for its widespread acknowledgment, will be a supporting element in my overarching research. One very powerful piece of this constructed ideology is instilling the importance of the American dream. The idea of achieving the ultimate success-- financial security, wife/kids and a home of your own-- if you work hard enough, is a portion of the hegemonic force that reached Central America. American dream narratives engender a neoliberal desire to consume, therefore with the spreading of this ideology to Central America, there may have been an indoctrination of an entire generation of people who now think consumption is a critical component of their identities.

This dream ideology has been conceptualized by numerous scholars, Stoll (2009) asserts that the core assumption of the dream is that no matter your economic standing you always have the ability to build a better life for yourself and your children. Hills and Torres (2010) agree that success and prosperity is achieved through hard-work and determination for everyone, that we live in an open system of mobility. Along with these portrayals of a successful life comes the

ability to consume and to hold space in a world of consumption. The possibility of obtaining the American Dream (Sueno Americano) to this day is a key driving force of migration coupled with push factors like violence, lack of opportunity and corruption. While the latter still remains to be the major focus of migration scholarship and debate, the pull factor of the American dream (which is held in such high regard) may not be perceived as accessible to newer generations of immigrants.

To truly understand how U.S. intervention has left a lasting impression on the factors contributing to out-migration from Central American, we must observe how this has happened in the past. The United States has a critical history of intervention within Central America (specifically Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador), therefore, a portion of this thesis will delve into these relationships. A recent example would be the 2014 unaccompanied minor crisis, where thousands of young children made the dangerous journey from Central America to the United States because of the dire situations they faced in their home-countries. The U.S. led destabilization of this region goes as far back as the early twentieth century, through the Cold War period and up into the present. These periods of time, therefore, will be further analyzed in this work.

I will first outline the key terms I plan to incorporate, as there are several complex topics I will address. Next, I will survey the scholarship surrounding my topic in order to find the gap for my research. This will be followed by a historical analysis, which will address Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua and how these early relations have left lasting legacies of intervention visible today. Along with this notion of “lasting legacies,” discourse analysis will follow, with a break-down of two alliance proposals, The Alliance for Progress (1961) and the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity (2016). Through discourse analysis we will find the strong and

debilitating implications of word choice and development language. This thesis will be two-fold in the sense that it will address how migration has been affected by factors such as the American dream, neoliberalism and historical interventions and then use statistical data corroborated by personal interviews with immigrants in order to observe a generational shift in immigrant identities.

Key Terms

Throughout this thesis I will be using loaded terms, therefore I would like to unpack my key terms in order to maintain a sense of agreement within this work. Beginning first with **neoliberalism**, which can be defined in economic, political or social terms. For this paper neoliberalism will go hand in hand with the moment development was equated with “freedom” (Sachs 1992). When the emergence of globalization and the push for development was accompanied by free-market policies and a transnational consumer class, we began to see the expansion of neoliberal manifestations (both concrete and ideological) throughout the world. While neoliberalism was first disguised as a positive economic model for all, due to the widespread flow of goods/services/ideas, Harvey (2005) implores us to remember just how neoliberalism comes into being.

With the failures of capitalism and communism in their raw forms, “There was a need to construct the right blend of state, market and democratic institutions” (Harvey 2005, 10). With embedded liberalism creating growth for a short period of time, it’s inevitable downfall came in the 1960s. Liberalism allowed for a relationship of restraint and freedom to flourish until tax revenues plunged and social expenditures increased causing a downward spiral calling for a new system (Harvey 2005). Neoliberalism emerges as the response to a loss of class power and a “seemingly inevitable move” cemented by the Washington Consensus (free market economic

ideas put forth by the IMF, World Bank and World Trade Organization). This political project, therefore, put in place a system where power was granted to larger, dominant countries and capital accumulation was restored to the elite class. It proved ineffective in revitalizing global capital accumulation.

This is the moment where the United States becomes the economic hegemon as their ability to accumulate capital and maintain power through policy and neoliberal reform explodes. Neoliberalism therefore is closely related to governmentality, which Rose (1999) asserts is a useful substitute for high levels of regulation and management. This power is then expanded and globalized via self-organizing networks. This term encompasses “freedom” but freedom within a system that has been carefully crafted and maintained to support state institutions. Sen (1993) urges us to remember that individual agency is an important component to remedying the larger economic and developmental issues throughout the world, but that it is also critical to accept that, “The freedom of agency that we individually have is inescapably qualified and constrained by the social, political and economic opportunities that are available to us. There is a deep complementarity between individual agency and social arrangements” (Sen 2000, xii). U.S. economic hegemony is, therefore, the basis for my historical and contemporary analysis as it will allow me to compare the ways in which early productions of neoliberal policy have steadily altered the political and social makeup of Central America and simultaneously altered the motivations of immigrants.

The next key term is capitalism, which I believe most people have somewhat of a grasp on, again for the purpose of this research I want it precisely defined. Tracing back the origin of capitalism is somewhat tricky, “In most accounts of capitalism, there really is no beginning. Capitalism seems always to be there, somewhere; and it only needs to be released from its

chains, from the fetters of feudalism (or whatever), to be allowed to grow and Mature” (Wood 1996, 25). Capitalism can be traced back to early units of exchange all the way to our modern world system. I am mainly concerned with modern capitalism, what Fredric Jameson (2007) would call “Late-capitalism” as well as a new sect of capitalism coined by Jean and John Comaroff, “Millennial Capitalism.” Defined by the Comaroff’s to, “Mean both capitalism at the millennium and capitalism in its messianic, salvific, even magical manifestations. A capitalism that presents itself as a gospel of salvation; a capitalism that, if rightly harnessed, is invested with the capacity wholly to transform the universe of the marginalized and disempowered” (Comaroff 2000, 2).

This definition places capitalism as the vehicle for achieving much of the American dream rhetoric that will be discussed. Where neoliberalism is the dominant economic ideology in the world, capitalism (closely intertwined) will serve as the vehicle for achieving a “consumerist identity”. Therefore, while the American Dream engenders neoliberal desire, capitalism is the means to achieving the desire. Capitalism has been revered as the end all be all of the economic world, yet how beneficial has it been to the sovereignty of the nation-state, the movement of labor, or in the creation of the money centric world? Capitalism, therefore, in the context of this study signifies the ways in which capital accumulation occurs but also mirrors the sentiment that, “The postmodern person is a subject made with objects” (Comaroff 2000, 294).

Consumerism encompasses how capitalism (and the importance placed on accumulation) has turned into much more than an exchange of goods and services and is now an integral part of our identities. The desire to consume has spread throughout the world via advertisements, television shows, music, malls even aid and development interventions. Over the course of the twentieth and twenty first-centuries (and some would argue starting as early as the

nineteenth century) we have seen the emergence of a consumer class overtaking civil society and culminating within government, politics and citizenship. “It is no longer possible to cut the deck neatly between citizenship and civic duty, on one side, and consumption and self-interest, on the other” (Scammell 2000 cited in Hargreaves 2016). Politicians have switched their campaign strategies and are now “grounded in marketing principles, with branding of political candidates and issues, targeted political advertising, staged media events, and market segmentation strategies” (Shah et. al. 2007, 8). When discussing Central American migration, we have to consider how the integration of consumerism within the American dream narrative has greatly altered the identities of immigrants and where this construct began.

Methods

My research design includes three separate components that work together to address the ways in which U.S. economic hegemony and political intervention have influenced a shift in immigrant identities. Each component allows us to examine this complex question and understand the larger concept of migration in a unique way that might otherwise be overlooked. The first component of my research will be to take a look at the bodies of literature surrounding the key terms I have defined: neoliberalism, capitalism and consumerism. In order to address a gap in the literature, we need to thoroughly examine what scholarship already exists. There is quite a substantial amount of literature on migration studies, U.S. economic hegemony (neoliberalism) and capitalism therefore it would be extremely unrealistic to say I will be covering everything. Instead I will be examining larger themes and theories, which will lead me to the gap I strive to fill with my own research. Looking at the different motivations and identities held generationally by immigrants will allow us to better understand migration in the contemporary moment. Analyzing the literature in a way that allows us to evaluate how the

American dream has shifted from the Alliances (discussed in the historical analysis chapter) and anti-communist interventions, to today's construct of immigrant will be another key aspect of the literature review as well as the theoretical basis for my data and subsequent analysis.

The next section of this thesis will delve into the historical significance of U.S. intervention in Central America and the events leading up to the present moment. There will be contextualization of the time periods before the two alliances were drafted by U.S. administrations including early 20th century political relations between the U.S. and Central America and anti-communist moments of intervention. Once there is a better understanding of the history between these two, we will shift to a discourse analysis of "The Alliance for Progress" and "The Plan of the Alliance of Prosperity." Each alliance sheds light on a particular way the U.S. and Central American governments have crafted and manipulated identities within the region and inadvertently set up unattainable standards of achievement that were doomed to fail. I will analyze these documents as well as their larger and lasting legacies in hopes of connecting these alliances to the "new immigrant" construct we are seeing take shape today.

The last component of my thesis will allow me to connect my largely literature based research to real world indicators in order to evaluate a shift in identity and construction of a "new immigrant." I believe the development of this construct has been influenced by intervention in Central America and has subsequently created a shift in what makes up immigrant identities. This, therefore, will heavily influence immigrant desire or ability to achieve the American dream. As my literature review will show, the American dream historically has been at the forefront of the motivation to immigrate. This dream asserts that if you can get to America and work hard enough you will find success and prosperity. I believe this dream is no longer attached to those traditional assertions, especially for immigrant populations. In order to support that idea,

I will be looking at census data surrounding foreign born populations, more specifically Central Americans. What I intend to show with this data is that indicators of ‘success’ (as stipulated in the traditional American dream rhetoric) --owning a house, sustainable income, reaching college level of education, having a wife and 2.5 children etc.--have steadily lost their importance in Central American populations. Using this data, I will then support my claims with one on one interviews with various generations of immigrants.

Four interviews were conducted with Central American immigrants living in California. For the purposes of this study the country of origin and other identifying information about these four people was not a critical component of the analysis. What was necessary was the age of the immigrants and their personal narratives and views on aspects of the American dream with no guidance from the interviewer. Because this study seeks to evaluate a shift in identities over time and therefore generationally, interviews were conducted with two subjects in their twenties and two subjects in their seventies. The interviews were semi-structured and followed a rough interview guide, but the questions were left open ended and as each interview progressed they all took on a unique path. Each interview lasted about forty-five minutes and all were conducted in person, at each individual subject’s house. These interviews allowed for a comparison between the statistical shifts noted in the first data section combined with human testimony allowing us to discern a more in-depth analysis of a shift in immigrant identities as influenced by the American dream.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The research question at hand draws our attention to three distinct bodies of literature. The question being, how has U.S. economic hegemony and political intervention in Central America contributed to the construct of a “new immigrant” identity? The scholarship that

warrants investigation will be each element of this rather overarching thesis question. The larger bodies of literature I will be reviewing in order to find the gap in which my research comes into being will be: migration, U.S. economic hegemony (neoliberalism) and consumerism or the politics of consumption. These three areas of scholarly inquiry have many intersections and at some moments will seem almost interchangeable, yet each has unique analytical and theoretical weight for this thesis. These bodies of literature will help us to better understand what research has already been conducted and the main themes or concepts surrounding each topic. A major goal of this literature review and my work as a whole will be to take the substantial amount of scholarship on consumerism, economic policy, and migration and nuance some of the larger points in a direction that may otherwise have been overlooked. I hope to draw connections between these three topics and observe a gap in the research.

Consumerism and the Politics of Consumption

Consumerism is the larger analytic basis for which I will make claims about a difference in generational motivations for immigrating. This difference is due in large part to a growing consumer class, which has been aided and invested in by the United States. Before we expand on my own research and hypothesis we need to look at what consumerism is and how it has developed. When searching through the large body of literature, my findings have shown that there is plenty to be said about consumption as a whole, the shift in buying patterns and the ways in which the global dawning of capitalism have by and large created a new genre of human. Most of the literature is based on the findings from rich western nations (i.e. the United States) on their consumerist identity. Victoria Hurth in her work entitled, “Consumption and Identity” does offer a variety of insights from various theorists who elucidate their ideas on consumption, something

I find very beneficial. She breaks down her research to examine how consumerism has proven extremely detrimental to the environment as it is unsustainable and how it is fetishized by government. These two concepts are common in the literature on consumerism as well as the subject of the studies being concerned only with those consumers who constituted a rich western nation.

Development of Consumerism in Central America

The development of consumerism has a clear path within the United States, which Hurth draws out in her work. This aspect of her research is helpful in regards to my own work because it allows us to contextualize what was happening in Central America on the timeline of the development of consumption in the United States. Beginning in 18th century United States, there was an explosion of shops which called for new market strategies, these included things like consumer-credit and advertisements in weekly newspapers (Hurth 2013). By the mid-1800s we see the development of the department store, mass production, and catalogues which are all reaching far, rural locations, which they had never done before. For the first time there had been a change in the definition of “necessities” now encompassing goods and services that seemed frivolous in years prior. One hundred years later (1950s), the postwar identities were widespread and consumerism had penetrated into all class levels of society (Hurth 2013). With the growth of the market there was also massive population growth which led to urbanization and changes in employment during this time. These were all crucial elements of people’s identities therefore the advancement of consumerism meant that a lot of people felt their concrete identities were slipping away and needed to shift with the times.

Central America on this timeline plays out a little differently. In order to stay within the scope of this section and avoid regurgitating a long list of historic events that coincide with the

above events, I ground Latin America in the context in which they enter this specific consumerist moment. Arlene Davila takes us to the moment when Hispanic advertising (which she explains “Hispanic” had become the all-encompassing term for anyone of the Spanish speaking language during this time) begins to penetrate the markets in Latin America and reach markets in America. For most Americans, this was their first experience with a foreign identity solidifying around them. What is interesting in fact, is that long before this moment of “birth” within American advertising and society, consumerism had been at the forefront of U.S./Central American relations long before the 1950s. The major players in the Hispanic Advertising industry had strong ties with the industry due to, “previous attempts at globalization by the international advertising industry, whose early extension into places like Cuba and Mexico was fundamental to the subsequent development of the advertising agencies targeting U.S. Hispanic populations” (Davila 2001, 48). This shows us once again that the implementation of neoliberal ideas and the expansion of capitalism within Latin America had been occurring for generations and both regions were responsible for and gaining from this alliance.

With the growth of consumerism and subsequently the growth of the advertising industry the question of representation within these ads brings up greater discrepancies in identity. Minority groups historically have been underrepresented. Davila makes a point in stating that even with the offshoot of a “Hispanic” advertising sector, “These populations have historically lacked access to public venues of self-representation, it is in the market and through marketing discourse that they are increasingly debating their social identities and public standing” (Davila 2001, 28). The fact that this sector is coined “Hispanic” allows a large multicultural and multiethnic group be reduced to one flattened category. This brings up one of Hurth’s most interesting points and one that I continued to find within the literature. The growth of

consumerism over the years proved to be a shift from a group identity to an individual identity, which is where the connection between consuming and freedom comes into question. In her work she states, “In many consumerist societies, consumerism is equated with individual freedom, a cultural connection both created by, and played upon, by marketing and particularly advertising” (Hurth 2013, 10). Capitalism and more specifically, “Millennial Capitalism,” offers up insurmountable contradictions. While Hurth puts forth the idea of individual freedom being wrapped up in the ability to consume, Jean and John Comaroff remind us that consuming also has the ability to include and marginalize, increase desire and at the same time diminish job security, exacerbate class struggle while also undermining class consciousness, create pathways with extreme wealth for some and completely neglect others (Comaroff 2001).

Identity and Consumption

A switch from a group identity to an individual one is extremely visible in the United States today, where identity used to be closely linked to religion and the jobs we maintained we have seen fewer people devoted to a particular religion and the volatility of the job market affect those of all classes. Hurth does make sure to state that the identity processes that are favored in western societies (continuity, distinctiveness, self-efficacy and self-esteem) are culturally specific and relative (Hurth 2013). While I agree with that statement, I think the same processes can come about in non-western nations when the construct of that very consumerist identity or “good-life” has been presented. Meaning it’s more of a matter of environmental stimuli and timing that can spur the process of a consumerist identity.

Discussed above is the switch from group to individual identity, but how then is that individual identity manipulated based on products. The literature makes observations about identity being malleable and ever changing. Here again we can see a gap when it comes to

different ethnic and economic backgrounds of the subject of the literature. One such subject being immigrant populations. With new identity constructs forever being created, who is to say that these constructs aren't carried over to one of a new immigrant? Hurth states, "In a world of malleable yet constantly threatened identity, our personal and relational identity narratives are constantly being rewritten in response to changing circumstances (e.g. job loss, divorce etc.), political interventions, and commercial pressures which play on both our group identities and personal identity projects" (Hurth 2013, 16). Political interventions according to her, mean national group or identity campaigns, where I believe historic political interventions (like those which I have discussed in the history chapter) have led to a rewriting of identity.

Because our identities are so malleable and predicated on what now seem to be such fluid concepts, a strong cultural force can greatly affect those identities. How then do we cope with a constantly changing self? There is the need to reinvent, move away from or demand equal recognition for that identity. This is known as "identity politics" and an example would be demanding equal recognition based on gender, ethnicity and sexuality. The Comaroffs bring our attention to an emerging age group that, fueled by class anxieties, are stepping up and asserting their identity. "The rise of assertive, global youth cultures of desire, self-expression, and representation; in some places, too, of potent if unconventional forms of 'politicization' have taken this new millennial moment of capitalism and gained unprecedented autonomy" (Comaroff 2000, 307). This is true of youth immigrant populations as well, however these sites of politicization are often sites of tension for the disadvantaged youth, often coming from different countries in hopes of taking advantage of the free market. It is fascinating that these identity politics are again bound up with consumption that, "In the U.S. at least, the right to consume has even become part of campaigns by minority groups for inclusion and recognition" (Hurth 2013,

12). How then have we seen the identity politics of the new immigrant change from that of previous generations of immigrants? How has consumption been a driving force of migration?

This is again a gap in the research I hope to fill.

Some initial observations about the shift in identities over generations could help shed some light on those of immigrant identities then and now. A crucial element of analysis is understanding that identities have become fragmented in the modern world. Phil Hanlon and Sandra Carlisle put it this way

“No longer anchored in tradition, religion or law etc., identity in the modern world can only emerge from choice. A sense of self and purpose in life are no longer ascribed or obvious in such societies, so their development becomes a key task... consumption practices provide us with meaning, purpose and a way of constructing appropriate personal and social identities” (cited in Hurth 2013, 11).

These scholars claim that the missing piece of ourselves, a piece that was once intrinsically tied to larger social norms, is no longer readily available and consumption has filled that gap. This point of view is confirmed by Ulrich Beck, a German sociologist who also suggests consumption filled a gap that had been created by those of traditional identity structures, the need to feel secure in who we are as it reflects status. And another sociologist, Anthony Giddens argues, “Everyday consumption choices in today’s world are increasingly decisions not only about how to act but who to be” (cited in Hurth 2013, 17).

U.S. Economic Hegemony and Central America

Here is where we start to understand the context of neoliberalism in Latin America and the great effect it has had on not only the economy but all aspects of life. With the deregulation

of markets and a switch to self-regulating markets, debt became a much larger problem for countries of the “third world.”

“This became an increasingly important issue from the late 1970s, as more and more debt had a short-term payback period, and interest rates increased. From 1980 to 1982, some countries began to default on the interest payments on their debt, until in 1982 Mexico threatened default and other high-debt Latin American countries followed” (Kiely 2005, 94).

Here, Kiely does an excellent job of identifying the key moment of the emergence of neoliberal globalization in Latin America. The IMF is the organization that steps forward to police the debt crisis and therefore opened the doors to neoliberalism in Latin America. What followed in the “first world” was a major recession, calling for even greater neoliberal restructuring including high interest rates, cuts in state spending and Reaganomics, which would prove to be detrimental to nations of the third world.

A large part of the literature devoted to this topic is centered around how this entire time period played out, which actors were involved and how we got to where we are today... according to western scholars and interpretation. Gary Prevost and Carlos Oliva Campos approach the topic from a different perspective in their work, and coin the term Panamericanism. They believe Panamericanism, or the cooperation of all countries in the Americas, has been the U.S. adopted approach NOT integration. Their work offers a specific term for a concept that has been reiterated again and again in the literature. This is the idea that legislative policy is the first step in integrating migration policy, that allowing for the free flow of goods will eventually mean unobstructed pathways for legal migration, which has not been the case for U.S. and Central American relations. Compared to Kiely’s work, Campos and Prevost believe it was not a slow-moving path to U.S. economic hegemony but a characteristic of the U.S. “hegemonic

predestination” otherwise known as manifest destiny. They reference the Monroe Doctrine as a key defining moment for U.S. hegemony in order to defend U.S. interest, and to control their neighbors. Their definition of hegemony is specific which I think is crucial to understanding its influence over Latin America, “Hegemony is understood to be the capacity of power exercised by the United States (economic, political, military, ideological, technological, cultural) to decisively influence the internal and foreign policies of Latin America and Caribbean countries” (Prevost 2002, 11). These authors use a Gramscian definition of hegemony by noting expansionism to be the most critical element of power, which involved both isolationism and internationalism. Historically, we have seen both mechanisms take place, with the forced protectorates that come out of the Cold War and eventually NAFTA which promoted massive internationalism.

Moving from that theoretical lens to tangible examples of the expansion of U.S. hegemony, NAFTA (The North American Free Trade Agreement) is the next key element. NAFTA is a prime example of the term Panamericansim or the ability to overshadow the need for migration policy with expanded trade policy. While it may have been proposed as means to integration between the Americas it would result in the economic manipulation as outline by Rosario Green, “The U.S. global domination project has been expressed in Latin America and the Caribbean in three classic ways: political imposition, invasion and military intervention and economic manipulation” (Cited in Prevost 2002, 13). The most important statement these authors make in this piece is that the U.S. hegemonic force would not be powerful without the backing from Latin America and the Caribbean in some sectors that respond to U.S. interest. Meaning it is a two-way street. If we wish to truly evaluate the ways in which intervention has affected migration we have to look at the ways Latin America (and in particular the Latin American elite)

was involved in the situation and the various ways they could have handled it was well. Klaus Schubert explains that there were two ways Latin America could have handled hegemony and we have seen this region utilize both at different moments in history, “It (Latin America) can adjust its instruments to work in terms of self-sustaining national development, or it can devote itself to thoroughly examining the definition of the ideal instruments to negotiate its dependency” (Prevost 2002, 14).

Neoliberal Manifestations

After WWII Latin America had no real choice but to align with the U.S. due to the rigid imperialist system. In the late 1900s we see more autonomy on the part of Latin America as they reconnect with Western Europe, push for agrarian reform, create strong links to Cuba and violently respond to the U.S. interventions. As mentioned in the Consumerism section, this was also the moment we see Hispanic marketing develop, again a moment where both parties involved were benefiting from neoliberal capitalism and we start to see the manifestations of those products being advertised. Another neoliberal manifestation we need to address comes from a second piece of literature by Arlene Davila where she observes the massive expansion of shopping malls in Latin America. This work raises questions about the shifting of identities as they are central to what we consume and how that has potentially caused a shift in desire and the American dream narrative for native and foreign-born populations.

There have been over 300 shopping malls constructed from 2011 to 2016 in Latin America (Davila 2016). This is a massive concrete manifestation of capitalism within the region and has contributed to the growth of a new middle class in Latin America. Davila is concerned with the spatialization of these malls and how they have created a landscape of new inclusionary practices while simultaneously excluding certain groups. Her work aligns with much of the

research and theory involved in this thesis. Malls have been a unique and aggressive vehicle for neoliberal ideas and lifestyle choices, “A key trend has been a focus on how they (malls) create and interpolate people as consumers/citizens while helping to impart modernity across the globe” (Davila 2016, 2). My overarching hypothesis throughout this thesis has been to draw an almost causal relationship between U.S. intervention in Central America, by means of policy change and failed “alliances”, to increased migration. Davila addresses the second aspect of U.S. intervention that is contributing to migration and that is the constructed “good life” imagine that has taken tangible form in these shopping malls. She, like myself, is concerned that there has been very little research or attention paid to these new spaces for consumption. For this developing region, this has been the first time a major element of the world of consumption been revealed and readily available.

With the expansion of consumerism contributing to new class and spatial politics it has created the illusion of access to a middle class. Davila points out that the emerging middle class in these Latin American communities do not possess the same characteristics of a true middle class but rather, “Are considered to be more heterogeneous, more economically vulnerable and more impoverished than what we associate with dominant definitions of the middle class in the U.S. and Europe” (Davila 2016, 3). Again, the idea of navigating this world as a consumer has steadily penetrated every corner of the world, but who is truly granted access to that identity? Many social benefits are missing within this social class that would help it to align with the dominant definitions of middle class including benefits that were targeted in the alliances I address in earlier chapters--things like unemployment benefits, job security as well as ever increasing income inequality. Another interesting aspect of this new sector of the economy and the emergence of the middle class is how it is also contributing to a form of identity crisis on the

other end of the spectrum. The informal sector of the economy in Central America makes up the majority of the population and has historically been a major source for goods and services. So not only do we have people striving to achieve an identity within malls that may not actually be available to them, we have those involved in the informal economy taking a hit because the jobs at the mall are taking away their livelihoods. Both sides of this spectrum are facing new challenges to their identities.

The informal vs. formal sectors of the economy debate has been one fueled by bipartisan agendas. With the emergence of malls and the formal sector jobs they bring we have seen informal economic activities take a hit. There has long been the portrayal of the informal worker being at the forefront of underdevelopment and, “has conjured up negative connotations and images of exploitation, hardship and inequality. Most observers associate it with slow or stagnant economic growth” (Rakowski 1994, 501). With the implementation of capitalist models that supposedly contribute to growth, one begins to wonder what good wiping out one of the largest sectors of workers and economic activity could really do to better the development of Central America. Keith Hart (1973) maintains that this unique informal sector could aid in the growth of these “underdeveloped countries.” Hart, “derived his analysis from Weber’s theory of rationalization arguing that the informal economy might be both a source of growth and a crucial ingredient of economic transformation” (Dore 2014).

Wrapping up this portion of the literature review I think it’s crucial to realize the global effects of U.S. economic hegemony. Whether it’s through very specific legislation or alliances or even shopping malls, those who are not of the western world face much larger obstacles in order to align with that forced hegemony. These neoliberal values are now being instilled in populations throughout the world and as Davila points out, “They also involved affective

regimes that have an impact on people's imaginations and dreams in ways that make them far more powerful than many other land-intensive developments" (Davila 2001, 11).

Migration

The last body of literature is the overarching theme of my work, migration. I am claiming that due to U.S. hegemony and neoliberalism we have seen a growth of a consumerist identity, which is having an effect on migration. In order to substantiate that claim the larger body of literature on migration needs to be assessed. I have found that most research on migration, (specific to Central America to the United States) has been focused on structural issues within Central America. Migration studies as a whole have evolved and undergone various developments and catered to new trends. The unifying element of the literature is an agreement on push and pull factors. Thinking of migration in limiting terms will only cause us to flatten a very dynamic issue leading to the oversight of larger contributing factors. After discussing the consumerist identity, Nora Hamilton and Norma Stoltz perfectly incorporate migration into the mix, "Migration can be explained as the effect -- or one effect -- of contradictions, dislocations, and opportunities resulting from the penetration of capitalism (domestic or foreign) into nations at a lower level of development" (Hamilton and Stoltz 1991, 78). Building this statement out, I plan to add that the penetration of the American dream (in Central America) has contributed to the rise in neoliberal desire.

In order to get a full grasp of the migration studies literature while staying within the scope of this thesis, we will look at the major themes of migration scholarship. Peggy Levitt and B. Nadya Jaworsky give us insight as to the sociological perspective on the trends of transnational migration. Most of the migration that has been discussed is transnational in nature, meaning, "The process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations

that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007, 131). There has been a switch in the theory of assimilation within the larger narrative of transnational migration. It is now acknowledged that there are specific characteristics that need to be considered about the set of immigrants in discussion that determine the ways in which they will or will not assimilate within the new country. Some of these characteristics include immigrant enclaves, the means of departure, and the socio-political makeup of both the sending and receiving country (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007). Assimilation is an interesting aspect of immigrant identities, how perhaps have the behavior of assimilation evolved throughout the generations?

Each international migration network is shaped by the relationship between the sending and the receiving country, meaning the economic and political history between two countries is a major factor in continuous migration patterns. Within the scholarly literature, I have found that there are numerous explanations for migration between Central America and the United States. Massey (1998) asserts that the state of the economy is the largest contribution to out-migration, and proceeds to exemplify this statement with Mexican migration to the United States. He further explains that this migratory relationship is primarily contingent on the dependency of the developing economy on U.S. remittances (cited in Castillo 2014). Most of Massey’s findings are focused on economic push/pull factors of migration. He goes on to discuss that “migradollars” (remittances) are rarely used to aid development or investment when sent back to the country of origin. Massey further found that migradollars were used to, “extend everyday comforts...add on to existing dwellings and purchase commodities such as televisions, motor vehicles and other personal items” (Massey et al. 1998). This is an interesting point of his research which causes me to question, why is it that these hard earned migradollars are being spent on useless material

goods? Where does the desire for these goods come from, is it simply human nature to spend on products or is there some deeper social processes at play?

Bean and Stevens (2003) are again focused on weak economies as a major source of out-migration. Their research is primarily focused on the effects of transnational migration on the United States. Bean and Stevens make interesting statements that center around immigrant success and relative inclusion in the United States as contingent on the purchase of real estate. That the longer and more stable the immigrant is within the United States correlates to the ownership of property or real estate within the country. I thought this was a sentiment that perfectly aligns with the ideals of the American dream, as home ownership in any other country does not equate such characteristics as stability and inclusion. In fact, this is a major point of my research as it is a forced idea of the neoliberal agenda. Again, this causes me to question if this is a causal relationship and how this relationship has been shaped and molded between generations of immigrants.

Portes and Rumbaut (2006) comprise another niche debate in the literature, with their background in labor market theory. Their view is that, “Most contemporary migration is only a byproduct of globalization and the deregulation of various markets” (Castillo 2014, 37). In their research, this is what accounts for mass-migration from countries like Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras to the United States, an influx of service industry jobs within the developed world that Americans are not willing to take. This is certainly a pull factor to the United States and of course contributes to migration, again this aspect of migration is commonly understood. Where I would like to further explore, is how accessible these jobs actually are to immigrants and if they offer any opportunity to achieve all of the successes promised.

This ever changing, globalized world we live in today truly affects every aspect of our lives. The approach to migration studies therefore needed to change as well in order to account for the difference in transnational migrants across generations. A crucial part of Levitt and Jaworsky's paper is the referencing of various scholars who note the change in practices between first generation and subsequent generations of migrants.

“Many scholars of migration now accept that transnational practices and attachments have been and continue to be widespread among the first generation, but far fewer think these ties persist among subsequent generations. They cite both declining language fluency and survey findings indicating that the children of immigrants have no intention of returning to live in their ancestral homes” (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007, 132).

I would like to extend this portion of the literature in my own research to see the effects of neoliberal manifestations between the generations. There has been scholarship noting that transnational migration may be a by-product of late capitalism, case in point being the increase in remittances that have been shuttled back over the border. Along with economic indicators there has been a change in power and status between family networks of transnational migrants, again signifying capitalism has deeply engendered the lives of these migrants.

Chapter Three: Historical Analysis

Early 20th Century Politics (1900-1950)

The larger analysis of this research is predicated on the early moments of intervention by the U.S. in Central America. The controversial and loaded topic of migration on this side of the border stem from decades of destabilization and political turmoil caused by both the U.S and Central America. When addressing the idea that immigrant identities are shifting today, there needs to be a delineation of how that influence came to be. Therefore, we must take a look at the

histories of specific Central American countries and gauge the lasting effects felt from U.S. intervention, before discussing the significance of “The Alliance for Progress” and the “Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity.”

The historical moments that began to shape contemporary political relations between these two regions came in the early twentieth century with the ratification of the Platt Amendment in 1901, aimed at ensuring U.S. involvement in Cuba. While this event appeared to be non-invasive and helpful at first, it was a strategic move that gave the U.S. political authority to interfere in Cuban affairs whenever they deemed it necessary. This amendment was also drafted after years of neo-colonial aggression within Central America and solidified the United States’ position of domination. This was a unilateral power move that completely disregarded the sovereignty of Latin American states. This move, some considered an act of imperialism that would set the tone for future relations between the U.S. and Latin America throughout the rest of the twentieth century and onward (Peace 2018). Taking a deeper look at this history will help us to analyze the ways in which Latin American society has been affected by outside forces, and ultimately their major role in the current migration conflicts we see playing out today.

By merely observing the timeline of events between the U.S. and Latin America you can see structures of power and control begin to take shape. This isn’t to say, however, that Latin American governments and elites were not benefitting from this arrangement as well. Meaning there are always multiple actors involved and many ways to analyze this topic. This neo-colonial era was a moment when hierarchies of race and class were strengthened by the elites and exploited by outside forces. Simultaneously, when Latin America realized its greatest strength and opportunity within the global economy would be to focus on its export industry. This was fostered by the growth of European and American business control of several sectors and

industries within Latin America, and the expansion of European immigrants along the South American coast. With the growth of their export economies urban life developed rapidly as rural ways of life declined, this generated rapid growth within cities which created a great divide between workers in the countryside and “owners” of capitalist businesses. With increasing investment pumped into this region by Europeans it was commonplace for ranchers and peasants in the countryside to accrue large sums debt in order to survive. So, while the period of development proved beneficial for some (government and elites), the expansion of export economies would become detrimental to most. The U.S. made sure to get involved in this region economically, however would not stand for European competition. The Monroe Doctrine would become the key to establishing the western hemisphere off limits to anyone other than the United States.

The Monroe Doctrine (1823) (which was a precursor to the twentieth century political turmoil) began when James Monroe addressed congress and made it loud and clear to Great Britain (and the world) that the Western Hemisphere was the sole “responsibility” of the United States. They would no longer allow any colonization or interference within the affairs of the United States and its neighbors to the North and South. It was as if America deemed themselves “big brother” and it was his obligation as the older wiser one to protect the younger. This explicit warning would not take full effect until 1865, “When U.S. government exerted diplomatic and military pressure in support of the Mexican President Benito Juarez. This support enabled Juarez to lead a successful revolt against the Emperor Maximilian, who had been placed on the throne by the French government,” (Monroe Doctrine 1823). The United States finally had the military capability and financial backing to support the Monroe sentiment. While this policy may have seemed beneficial (and at first received in a positive manner in Latin America) it was soon

apparent this document was written approval allowing the U.S. to meddle in the affairs of the south in order to protect its own interests.

The addition of the Roosevelt Corollary (1904) took that written approval to the next level. As stated earlier, when urbanization was having its moment in Latin America and many farmers and peasants were forced into large sums of debt in order to maintain any sort of competition in the market, it was common that those debts would go unpaid due to lack of economic support and resources. So, at the beginning of the twentieth century creditors from Europe threatened armed intervention in order to collect those debts. President Theodore Roosevelt, foreseeing that any European backed wars or interventions in Latin America would have a direct effect on his economy and create a hostile environment in their “own backyard”, instated an international police force. “As a result, U.S. marines were sent into Santo Domingo in 1904, Nicaragua in 1911, and Haiti in 1915, ostensibly to keep the Europeans out” (Monroe Doctrine 1823). Roosevelt’s administration was also concerned with implementing stable governments in the region that he could have in his sphere of influence. This corollary was the justification needed for intervention within Central America and put in place a series of protectorates that aligned with the 1901 Platt Amendment in Cuba, which placed restrictions on autonomy and freedom within the region. Franklin D. Roosevelt made strides to move away from the Corollary by implementing the “Good Neighbor Policy” which agreed to halt any interventions in Cuba, however he was not willing to give up the Naval Base in Guantanamo Bay. Closing out this portion of history, the interventionist tendencies of the United States did not slow down, in fact continued to be disguised in many treaties post WWII.

Anti-Communist interventions (1950-2000)

Not surprisingly, the “Good Neighbor Policy” did not stop the U.S. from intervening in Central and South America. Where Theodore Roosevelt was concerned with creating stable governments in this region, administrations in the mid-twentieth century were focused on maintaining full control over how those governments decided to run their countries. This period of time is well known for forbiddance of any sign of communism both within America and countries of interest. This time period would be remembered for over 35 interventions in Latin America by the United States and numerous instances where those interventions would go on to cause immense political/economic hardship, even greater corruption even to the extent of genocide, and mass-violence. In order to understand how Central America was affected by U.S. intervention we will look at the case studies of Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador.

Guatemala

Guatemala first faced U.S intervention when Jacobo Arbenz (who came to power after Jorge Ubico was forced to resign by rebel forces) proposed plans for agrarian reform. He was democratically elected and ran on a platform of social services and major land redistribution. This plan was, “The first and only occasion in Guatemala when ‘a significant part of the state authority was used to promote the interests of the nation’s masses” (Ferreira 2008, 61). His election was very promising for the people of Guatemala who desperately needed to take back control over their land from large foreign corporations. One of those corporations being The United Fruit Company (U.S. company), who had massive land holdings in Guatemala. Arbenz’s plan to redistribute land to small scale farmers and peasants would directly affect their business and massive banana plantations which they had acquired in an illegal land grab to begin with. The economic effect alone was enough to cause major upheaval between the company and the

Guatemalan government. Unfortunately for Arbenz and the Guatemalan people, the United Fruit Company was largely connected to the United States' government, having several board members who either served in congress or within other government sectors, or had direct ties to representatives.

The second global problem working against Arbenz at the time was a heightened fear of communism. The U.S decided this agrarian reform was the first manifestation of communism and needed to be stopped by any means necessary. The CIA began to plot how to overthrow Arbenz, "and after several military coup attempts and an intensive national and international campaign by the Eisenhower administration against Arbenz, a small force of exiles and mercenaries invaded from Honduras and penetrated a few miles into the country" (Ferreira 2008, 61). This continued pressure eventually caused Arbenz to resign and the constitutional government was overthrown, Castillo Armas comes to power. Armas pushed the United States agenda and repealed the agrarian reform and decreed a Preventive Penal Law to fight communism. This lead to the arrest of thousands of suspected communists with no access to an appeal. Protest broke out and fueled a greater divide between the rich and the poor (as again elites were benefiting off the relations between the U.S. and Guatemala) (Timeline: Guatemala's History of Violence).

Armas was assassinated after two short years as President in 1957. Civil war officially began in 1960. General Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes assumes power and the country is now under autocratic rule. This time period would be marked by violence, death squads and public displays of violence and mutilation by the police and army. At the most heightened point of the violence and corruption Efraim Rios Montt comes to power in a military coup. He would eventually oust two other members of the junta and assume full dictatorial power. The United States during the

Reagan administration fully supported Rios Montt and his fight against the leftist guerrilla, even going as far to applaud him for his improvements to the human rights violations in Guatemala. Ronald Reagan was so eager to help Rios Montt, in fact, he lifted an arms embargo that had been in place due to human rights violations.

Rios Montt's time in power was not characterized by a return to democracy as the United States had so surely believed it would be. No, instead the bloody civil war raged on between the leftist guerrillas and the military army. Death squads were rampant and military courts had full power to impose death sentences on anyone they deemed "left". The leftist insurgencies often found refuge in the Guatemalan highlands where majority Maya populations lived. Massive wide scale attacks against the indigenous communities on the part of the military began. Even in cases where Mayans were not helping the guerrillas, genocide was now in full effect. The wrath of Rios Montt would continue to haunt Guatemala even passed the Peace Accords, which were signed in 1996 ending the thirty-six-year conflict. Rios Montt would be tried for crimes against humanity in 2012 and convicted in 2013. However, the verdict was overturned based on trial errors and a retrial would be called. Guatemala has been trying to overcome its past and memorialize all of the trauma that was felt during throughout these years. The large distrust for their government and military can still be felt today. The large distrust for the United States and their involvement in the region will be felt forever.

Nicaragua

Relations between the United States and Nicaragua very much mirror those of Guatemala and El Salvador. With an unequal relationship spanning over 150 years Nicaragua was a crucial land mass to control for the United States, representing a land and sea route that could cut time in half for business interests during the gold rush. At the turn of the 20th century the United States

become a huge presence in Nicaragua. With political unrest sparking a 30-year Marine occupation and a complete and utter denial of a coup, the Nicaraguan people would have to endure American intervention for well over a decade. Understanding the deeper historical implications of U.S. interventions within each country will uncover the deep-rooted influence over identity within this region.

The United States meddled in Nicaragua economically, politically and forcefully. First, Nicaragua was a Central American country that served as valuable land for U.S. interest both as a viable fruit production space as well as a perfect spot to implement a canal which would lend itself as a faster trade route. The repercussions of these actions would lead to long term environmental destruction (due to the need to set up infrastructure in order to transport the fruit out of the country) and internal conflicts between the U.S. and the Nicaraguan government. The U.S had complete disregard for the destruction of coastal habitats and indigenous land. Pesticides were also introduced to this region for the first time which contributed to widespread health concerns and angered the Nicaragua government (Thrupp 1988). Finally, the frustration with the U.S. peaked and sparked the Nicaraguan government to issue a buffer zone of thirty miles of coastal land to remain untouched. However, “the major companies could either usually evade the law’s restrictions or force their appeal” (Tucker 2000, 55). So not only were these companies angering the government, they were creating an anti-American feeling for all the indigenous land owners whom they had driven off their farm land.

The U.S. and Nicaragua had deep political relations. During Theodore Roosevelt’s presidency, Nicaraguan Despot Zelaya caused panic (to the U.S.) due to his hostility toward American business along the Mosquito coast. This caused the United States to enlist the help of the Mexican government to oust him and his cronies, through the financing of a conservative

party revolt they did just that. The United States discouraged anyone to intervene in Nicaragua but reserved that right solely for themselves, exemplifying even more clearly the power that was to be exerted over this country. After all, the U.S. laid out their objectives, “To protect the lives and property of American citizens and European nationals by establishing constitutional government and a guarantee of its maintenance... to guarantee American strategic security by controlling the approaches of Isthmian canal routes” (Baylen 1954, 129). After recognizing the Estrada regime in 1911 the U.S (knowing this new government would not survive without their military support) begins to withdrawn influence. Adolfo Diaz and Luis Mena swiftly remove Estrada (1912). Diaz turns on Mena and rejects his hopes of presidency which sends him into revolt and alliance with Zelaya. Diaz quickly calls on the United States’ aid which results in the deployment of 2700 Marines to crush Zelayaism and Mena (Baylen 1954).

This call for Marine support by the Diaz administration was a perfect entry point for a large U.S. trained standing military in Nicaragua. Secretary of State at the time, Philander Knox, justified the Marine intervention by reminding everyone Diaz had requested them to stay. This worked largely in the United States’ favor as they maintained control of the canal zone in this region. Fully driven by self-interest, the U.S would continue to have a hand in subsequent elections until the time of the roll out of the Monroe Doctrine. New Secretary of State Charles Hughes greatly urged the U.S to remove itself from Nicaragua in order to preserve the promise that the Monroe Doctrine was NOT a cover for intervention. This was not an easy task, as the Chamorro dynasty persisted conservatives did not want Marines to leave, and simultaneously did not want a change to the system that would create fairer elections (Baylen 1954). The U.S continued to have minimal influence within the country until finally removing marines in August

of 1925. With a series of elections and over takings, the U.S still attempting to oversee elections results in greater dependence rather than self-sufficiency.

Just one year after Marines were removed from Nicaragua, the violence between the liberals and conservatives had reached an all-time high bringing the Marines back into the country (after all, there was expansive U.S. interest/business to protect). The Marines quickly establish neutral zones, and Diaz is again restored as an interim president. Still facing revolt Diaz requests additional U.S support (White 2011). Marines were going to be left in the country to train a new Guardia Nacional. One liberal leader was not in support of any U.S. backed military or interference, Augusto Cesar Sandino. Sandino raises a rebel army in direct resistance to U.S. interference, which would continue to ravish Nicaragua and fight against U.S. Marine intervention until the election of Anastasio Somoza Garcia who would secure dictatorial power over Nicaragua for 40 years.

The Sandinista party, however, did not die with Sandino. In fact, the Nicaraguan Revolution (1978-79) would be led by the Sandinista party who would eventually overthrow the Somoza Dictatorship. With this small victory over a U.S supported Dictator, the Contra War emerged which started as, “A series of Rebellions against the Sandinista government of Nicaragua that had overthrown the Somoza dictatorship in 1979” (Nicaragua Origins and Effects). The Contra forces would never gain the support of the Nicaraguan people as they engaged in human rights abuses and atrocities. Ronald Reagan quickly saw the Contras as an entity to which he could extend his power and defeat the subversive Sandinistas. However, Congress did not readily agree and limited the ways he could support the Contras. The Iran-Contra scandal would cast a dark shadow over the Reagan administration as dealings with Iran, Panamanian leader Manuel Noriega, cocaine traffickers and Colonel Oliver North were caught

dealing arms to Iran and rerouting the funds back to the Contra forces (Cheit 2010). These scandals and intense years of violence and dictatorship would not have been possible without the help of U.S intervention.

El Salvador

El Salvador will be the next case study we examine. While the United States had influence over all of Central America during these years of communist preventing interventions, El Salvador's moment came late in the Carter Administration in the nineteen seventies. This timeline falls into place as it follows the Nicaraguan revolution during a moment of reactionary moves by the U.S. within this entire region. In El Salvador, democratic elections were failing miserably and revolution was on the horizon. A collection of four leftist groups emerged to fight against the corrupt government, the Faribundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). At the peak moment of radical uprising the Reagan Administration takes power and we see the involvement in Central America skyrocket, as they established, "drawing the line" against communism in their own backyard. It is said that, "Reagan picked El Salvador as the test case for the future of democracy in Central America" (Rosenthal 1990, 38). Where the Carter Administration was concerned with human rights, mostly because there seemed to be no immediate threat in this region, Reagan's sharp anti-communist policy would take hold. Much like Guatemala, the United States allied itself with the political party that had caused much of the problems throughout El Salvador's history, in this case the Oligarch. However, the intervention was felt much stronger for El Salvador as the U.S. was obsessed with flexing its muscle and making an example out their civil war.

The problem with U.S. intervention in Central America, and most of the world, is that it typically neglected the underlying socio-political motives for revolutions and uprisings. Guerilla

movements and radical leftist are taken at face value and not understood from their deep meanings. In other words, there is a complete lack of understanding for the major injustices that had driven these groups to the point of radical movements in the first place. When this extremist behavior was brought to the attention of the United States at a time when political motives and the fear of a nuclear war were so rampant, their first instincts are to shut down the subversive by any means necessary. This is where we have seen major human rights violations and continued support for corrupt regimes occur. In the hope of maintaining some “social order” but eliminating the left, we find that this causes even greater turmoil and polarization.

El Salvador is a prime example of underlying political repression having caused these leftist groups to rise up. The government in El Salvador had a history of preserving the oligarchy who controlled nearly 60% of all arable land, which kept power in the hands of a select few. “The army seized power in 1932 in order to crush a peasant rebellion, which it did successfully at the cost of 30,000 lives” (LeoGrande 1981, 30), a peasant rebellion only trying to take back land that was rightfully theirs. This manipulation of power and control over the government and military lasted for well over a half century. Polarization of the country came when the hope for change and peace was squandered by the fraudulent counting of ballots. The Christian Democrats (PDC) headed by Napoleon Duarte would have won the election. This ballot-rigging led to armed violence against the PDC by the military and with no viable options for this group to bring about change legally, joining the leftist groups seemed to be their only option. That being the case, the left continued to grow as well as, “grassroots community groups of urban and rural poor who enforced their demands for economic reforms by mass demonstrations and civil disobedience” (LeoGrande 1981, 30). With failure to moderate the country, the government swung completely to the left. The United States continued to fund this government even though

they were completely neglecting reform platforms and violence against the left had escalate to massive military violence and death squads.

In January of 1981 the violence had reached an all-time high. The government was enforcing “Scorched Earth” policies and massacring entire towns. It has now been corroborated that the funding and weapons for this mass killings had come from the U.S. because they were directly supplying the government who they presumed to be fighting the “problem leftists”. The Massacre of El Mozote lasted three days and kill nearly a thousand people. El Salvador is just another example of U.S. intervention in Central America, even if intended to be helpful, resulting in immediate and long-term stagnation and violence.

Chapter Four: Discourse Analysis

The history between the U.S. and Latin America has always been a tumultuous one to say the least. From the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo to the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity, the United States has managed to maintain heavy involvement and influence in Mexico, Central America and the entirety of Latin America. Rarely is this involvement discussed in such a way as to implicate the United States as a main perpetrator of several of the root causes of migration we see discussed today. This involvement needs to be intricately evaluated and not simply taken at face value. There have been several “plans” and interventions on the part of the U.S. that have all had little to no positive outcomes for the people of Latin America (Linn 2017). The rhetoric we have seen transformed throughout the years has followed a development trajectory that places progress and results as the basis for evaluation. It began with the need to modernize Latin America, to take it from traditional society to render it ready for take-off, push it to maturity and finally achieve the status of high-mass consumption (Rostow 1991). Moving away from the politically incorrect language of modernization and modernity, we have seen the same power

ridden manipulation evident in the development plans instituted and backed by U.S. investment (Linn 2017).

Through these various interventions and “Alliances” there have been subtle ways in which the U.S. has imparted specific constructs of what it means to be successful, what Central American society should be striving for and distinct indicators of modernity (which they deemed the ultimate necessity). These constructs have been in the very rhetoric and action taken in the anti-communist interventions in Central America (reference history chapter) and in the plans implemented by John F. Kennedy and Barack Obama: The Alliance for Progress (1961) and the plan of the Alliance for Prosperity (2014). These documents proposed by the United States have had lasting implications within Central American society. First and foremost, we have seen the inability of this entire region to move past the horrendous acts indirectly caused by United States interventions including genocide, land grabs and military dictatorships and something much less visible, but the false hope given by various administrations through these plans for a “good life” that has been unobtainable due to failed follow through.

Alliance for Progress

While intervention in Latin America can be traced back to over a century ago, the first attempt to “rectify” the United States’ image in the region came in the plan enacted by John F. Kennedy in 1961. Known as the “Marshall Plan” of Latin America, this alliance came at a time when communist fear was high and U.S. interest in Latin America was low. However, after a successful Cuban Revolution the United States knew it was in their best interest to garner support, and more importantly, maintain domination in this region (as had been the case since the end of WWI and the implementation of the Monroe Doctrine and Roosevelt Corollary). As

opposed to asserting their hegemonic power over the region overtly, Kennedy carefully rolled out the “Alliance for Progress” and introduced it as a mutually shared burden of lifting this region out of poverty and promoting democracy.

The plan had a promising start and brought hope to a lot of the countries in Latin America that had been struggling with inadequate health care, public services, reliable government and police forces and land availability. The proposed funding for this plan would come from the United States in the form of grants but also foreign direct investment (which we would see become problematic in the long term) and from outside international lending agencies (Rabe 2017). However promising, the language within this plan and the specific goals and benchmarks that were expected to be achieved by Latin American governments (via proper roll out and participation) would construct a very particular lifestyle and “good life” that would leave Latin American people in a state of disappointment. The sheer number of goals this plan intended to hit was unrealistic from the start and the lack of true interest (on the part of the U.S. and Central America) to better the region and supply consistent funding, would cause more damage in the long-term.

Before we get explicitly into the language involved in this document a more in-depth background on this Alliance is needed. As stated previously, this Plan was an attempt to smooth relations between Latin America and the United States. This relationship was coming off of decades of intervention and mistrust, for example the, “Establishment early in the century of a National Bank of Nicaragua in which the New York Brown Brothers Bank held majority ownership” (Chomsky 2015, 12). This U.S. bank would continue to receive most of the revenue generated from the banking industry and completely disregard the Nicaraguan people. Or in Honduras where, “North American power had become so encompassing that U.S. military forces

and the United Fruit company could struggle against each other to see who was to control the Honduran government, then have the argument settled by the U.S. department of State” (Chomsky 2015, 7). There was a fully funded war ran in El Salvador, a military backed coup in Guatemala, the Carter administration forcing refugees fleeing their countries back to their cities of origin which was in direct violation of Human Rights Charter.

With all of these events leading up to the Alliance, there was no way that this aid proposal would be able to undo all of the damage that had already been done in this region. The plan was set up to fail due to the lack of true planning and resources it acquired before it came to fruition. Scholars looking back on this plan realized that, “it is clear that those preparing the charter were handicapped by lack of knowledge of how economic progress was or was not related to social and political development, and by lack of consensus on the relative importance and desirability of advance on the various fronts” (Perloff 1969, 27). The plan was launched as a partnership between the U.S. and Latin America to strive equally for the betterment of their society. This was certainly not the case as the U.S. made sure to keep its hand in every part of the process, meaning the money that was promised over the span of ten years came with contingencies. For example, a country in Latin America could not even be a player within this alliance without a national development program, which they designed themselves with limited working guidelines. This program then had to be fully approved and signed off by a U.S. elected official. Only until it went through this process could these countries begin to search for effective tools of implementing this charter.

At the creation of this alliance in Punta del Este (1961), Uruguay, the funding amount for this plan was never clear. First, “there was no adequate basis for determining how much Latin America as a whole would need annually in outside financing if the countries were to undertake

a major developmental thrust” (Perloff 1969, 46). So, the U.S. pledged to put forth twenty billion dollars over ten years, two billion every year. When we look back on how much money actually went toward achieving the goals within this charter we find that there was only about a fourth of that promised amount going to these countries whose National Development Plans had passed the test. After the poor planning from the start and subsequent years of discrediting events like the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile Crisis, Latin American support and involvement dwindled and, “From the point of view of Latin American nationalist, the Alliance was never able to overcome its identifications with Yankee Imperialism” (Alliance for Progress).

With that background knowledge on the context of this alliance we now need to examine the ways in which the roll-out of this alliance explicitly and implicitly had an impact on the identities of Central Americans. First addressing what was to be achieved via this plan. In “Title I” it is important to point out the distinct choice of words used, “Needs and Desires”, insisting that eventually these regional governments would be able to provide equal opportunities for everyone, that have been adapted to their own needs and desires (Hagen 1972). There are four main Titles in the charter, 1) Objective of the Alliance for Progress, 2) Economic and Social Development, 3) Economic Integration of Latin America and 4) Basic Export Commodities. The language and ideas implemented in the Alliance for Progress used contemporary social science theories (at the time) meaning the work of Walt Rostow (Rabe 2017). His work was focused entirely on economic growth and modernization as the way of proving achievement, “The assumption that ‘modern’ Latin Americans wanted to replicate superior U.S.-style institutions and inculcate Anglo-American values in their societies belied the concept of an “alliance” (Rabe 2017). The push to quickly modernize Latin America via the language and set-up of this alliance was all in hope of controlling this region before the communists could get ahold of it. Heavily

centered on economic-growth, Rostow deemed this region in the “take-off” staging, meaning if they could forcible create economic growth in the region, democracy would surely flourish.

What this plan inadvertently did was to begin the process of “Modernization” via an attempt to improve ALL aspects of life. This completely neglected the needs of the people and absolutely ignored the larger social issues that were present in these Latin American countries. Ignoring the current situation of these countries and instead putting into place a ten-year economic growth plan was the sole interest of the U.S. in order to keep out communist influence. But with that being said, the proposal and the hope for something stable and long withstanding was still exposed to the people of this region. President Kennedy was the face of that hope as he, “displayed the enthusiasm, confidence, and empathy inherent in the Alliance for Progress. During his abbreviated presidency, he toured Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico, and Costa Rica and received tumultuous welcomes. He participated, for example, in a land redistribution ceremony in Venezuela” (Rabe 2017). When the plans could not be carried out and U.S. involvement and funding diminished it didn’t matter that these people’s desires for a better life (one introduced to them and taken away) went away with it. In fact, I would argue this desire grew because of its sudden disappearance and caused Latin Americans to search for it elsewhere. We would continue to see this same pattern of aid and alliance play out in decades to come.

The Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity

The most recent plan we have seen play out during the Obama Administration is the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity. This plan, much like the Alliance for Prosperity was introduced as an aid package with a self-interest pushing agenda underlying all of the impressive language. This plan was implemented as a means to stem mass migration from Central America to the United States, incentivizing the option to “stay home”. After the unaccompanied minor

humanitarian crisis of 2014 when, “Tens of thousands of Honduran (as well as Guatemalan and El Salvadoran) children had walked out of the country and embarked on a perilous journey to the United States” (Hernandez 11). In fact, it was reported that between October 1, 2013 to September 20, 2014 there were 68,541 children apprehended at the border increasing 90% in this one year (Rising Child Migration 2017). This plan used development language to disguise a larger security initiative and promised funding based on unobtainable check marks of progress (Linn 2017). Again, this attempt at rectifying a crisis in Central America by the United States was circumvented by their own personal agenda and left this region and the thousands of children fleeing violence and corruption in a state of instability. What is crucial to see here are the ways in which a constructed vision of a better life have been draw up by these documents, policies and alliances, yet have never come to fruition. How has the rhetoric involved in these alliances contributed to out-migration from Central America to the United States and how has it failed in creating a true pathway to achieving a better life?

“The Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle of Central America (APP), a five-year joint regional plan created and implemented by the United States, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador was announced in November 2014” (Iesue 2016, 1). This plan was a response to the growing immigration crisis between these two regions, particularly intensified by the unaccompanied minor surge in 2014. This plan joined a collection of U.S. intervention cases, however this time it was perceived as an innovative and groundbreaking way to incentivize “staying home.” The amount of money that was allocated to this plan by the United States was substantial, creating a favorable response in the eyes of all of those involved (Linn 2017).

Before getting into the larger discourse and political implications of this plan, I will briefly breakdown it’s major components and strategies. “Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in

the Northern Triangle: A road Map” was the document developed by the countries of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras in order to sterilely lay out the largest structural issues contributing to emigration from these countries. This report was crafted by the countries of the Northern Triangle, in order to secure U.S. monetary backing, they were required to provide this written summary (much like the national development plans in the Alliance for Progress) and plan of rectifying the situation in order to receive the funds. The willingness to address major economic and political causes of the emigration truly encapsulates the eagerness between the two nations to protect ties as this is a mutually beneficial relationship.

The roadmap for this plan begins with addressing the perceived causes of the emigration, which comes off as a laundry list of problems. From low investment rates (which they state as the largest and most critical problem) and limited quality of services, to lack of healthcare and child development. There is not one major problem within the social, economic and political realities this plan does not wish to fix. The strategy that is divulged as means to fix all of these problems includes: “Stimulate the productive sector to create economic opportunities, develop opportunities for our people, improve public safety and enhancing access to the legal system and strengthen institutions to increase people’s trust in the State” (Plan of the Alliance). With such lofty and numerous goals, it would seem that the quality of attainment was not a major focus within this alliance (Linn 2017).

The next part of the road map addresses the demographic most affected by these failed sectors, “Males and females aged 15 to 30 seeking work that would provide them with a higher standard of living and greater opportunities for their children” (Plan of the Alliance). This plan is thereby centered around keeping that group of people in these countries and I think this is critical to understand the audience of this document. Following this definition, the plan launches into the

steps it has already taken for improving the human rights violations that surged during the unaccompanied minor crisis. In a self-approving voice these countries claim they have helped migrants in more ways than one. “Protection and care for people detained in the U.S.; receiving and caring for returning children and adolescents; social rehabilitations and integration; consular attention for migrants in transit; public awareness campaign and guarding border crossings” (Plan of Alliance 1). This notion of improved conditions for migrants has been heavily debated and in fact in an article by the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, “The APP has been under intense criticism by numerous human rights organization, immigration advocates, and policymakers, who claim it has only resulted in growing human rights violations at the expense of individuals seeking to migrate to the United States” (Iesue 2016, 1). When you begin to realize this document is more-so geared at earning and maintaining the 750 million dollars in U.S. investment in the area as long as the migration stops, the diction makes more sense (Linn 2017).

The next critical part of this document, which makes it inherently “achievement” based, is the attention that is given to growth. The plan makes clear that the desire to grow and develop has been hindered by the problems stated above and with the funding from the U.S. the growth can finally accelerate at a speed much more adequate to reach the final stage of the plan “assessment”. The authors of this document realize that the driving forces of migration are not found in the short-term, but that they stem from years of structural breakdown and lack of opportunities. The diction involved in the documents is nothing new, but rather has been repeated throughout the duration of the relationship between these two regions. This constructed goal (or goals) that needs to be achieved in order to be a successful country/person/nation has been deeply embedded in Central American society and continues to be the bedrock driving

force of migration to the United States. It is fascinating that this factor is overlooked whether intentionally or not by those who control these policies (Linn 2017).

There is no way that this Plan of Alliance, which if you recall is only set for 5 years, could be the solution to these systemic problems. Even more-so that the budgetary information to achieve this “medium term” solution to the problem is nowhere to be found, much like that in the Alliance for Progress. Nowhere is the laid-out plan of commitment these governments claim to be taking that will strengthen dedication and integration. Briefly, the last crucial portion of this plan is the obvious connection between the proposed funding by the U.S. and the opening of greater opportunities for U.S. based companies and products. Sub-sections pointing to this claim include: “Promoting strategic sectors and attracting investment (1), Modernizing and expanding infrastructure and logistics corridors (2), and Coordinating border management (3)” (Plan of the Alliance 10-13). It is crucial to understand that without this alliance and the large influx of migration to the United States from Central America, the United States would lose its control over the region and lose its national interest. This relationship is both independent of and highly dependent on each other (Linn 2017).

The Alliance for Progress, crafted by the Central American government, had to adhere to the strict guidelines given by the United States, which took away from the real needs of the people. This has been a common theme in the alliances. This plan completely disregards the ways in which Central Americans define growth and development, or how they wish their livelihoods would be improved. This hegemonic restructuring of government resources and improvements to “human capital” have little to do with these humans and everything to do with gaining fiscal support from the United States. When you attempt to construct a society based on

definitions of success outlined by another country, you end up with failed sectors and an increased desire to migrate.

Chapter Five: Data Introduction

The world we live in is more connected now than it has ever been, yet separation, racial tensions and political strife seems to be ever increasing. It's nothing new to state that the United States has deeply affected the Central American region in the past and to this day in both a systemic and overt manner. We have traced the historical implications of intervention, tracked the implementation of neoliberal capitalism and studied a shift from a group centered identity to one of an individualistic consumer class. What is left to examine now is how each of these contributions influenced the identities of the new Central American immigrant today? What has been the lasting impression of the infiltration of the American dream within Central Americans? Observing a shift in this dream and subsequently the identities of these immigrant populations will require analysis of specific indicators of this dream (as determined by scholarship pertaining to the American Dream) in numeric terms found in the United States Census in collaboration with testimonies from immigrants themselves. In order to fully understand the data analysis, explanation of the indicators must first be discussed. It is also important to distinguish the fact that these indicators are taken from a western point of view and literary lens and then used in conjunction with the chapter on The Alliance for Progress and the Plan for the Alliance of Prosperity. A deeper understanding of the American dream will allow us to disaggregate the specific components that comprise the dream.

The American dream has always been a crucial element of American society. Built on the protestant work ethic and deeply intertwined within the fabric of American culture. While this term does not make its way into print until the 20th century, the notion and values embedded

within the dream have been relevant since the pilgrims arrived in the new world (Campos 2009). The dream was first coined by James Truslow Adams in the 1931 book *The Epic of America* where he defines it as, “The dream of a better, richer and happier life for all our citizens of every rank... each generation has seen an uprising of ordinary Americans to save that dream from the forces which appeared to be overwhelming it” (cited in Campos 2009, 30). So, the cornerstone of the American dream since its birth has been the opportunity for success and a better life is readily available to all, no matter your station. The emphasis is also on achievement and constantly striving for something better. The dream is elusive, as there is no concrete definition. What constitutes my American dream may be a slight variation to what you consider to be most sacred. For this reason, there has been much discourse around what the dream truly comprises. Walter R. Fischer asserted that there are two major themes in the American dream literature, one of a materialistic nature and one of morality. The materialistic side of the dream evokes the god given right to attain, by any means necessary, the tangible items that equate success (the portion of the dream I am focused on specifically), this is based on one’s individual right to succeed (Campos 2009). The moralistic side of the dream is based on equal access to this dream, that everyone has the same chance to ‘pull themselves up by the bootstraps’ and make something of themselves.

Both variations of the dream have a place within this thesis. The Alliance for Progress is predicated on the fact that as a region and as individuals of Central America they had equal opportunity to pull themselves out of poverty, out of political violence in order to gain the support of the United States. A very flawed and failed alliance as we have seen. The materialistic side of the dream is one in which we draw our attention to now. The items, ideals, and indicators of success that are your “god given right” to obtain are rather specific within the dream. Objects

or intangible items that allow us to feel like we have made it, are important aspects that composed the American dream. But what are they?

After discussing the literature surrounding this topic, we look now at the American dream and by taking a deeper look at the work surrounding the American dream we can outline the indicators of success. Charu A. Chandrasaekhar, who works for the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, explains that, “Homeownership represents the attainment of the American dream” she goes on further to stipulate that this is especially true for immigrant populations (Chandrasaekhar 2004, 169). She states that this is the starting point for success and achievement and strengthens immigrant standings within the nation. Jennifer Hochschild truly captures what I am discussing in this paper by identifying the ‘tenets of success’ as defined by the American dream. She discusses the variations of the word success, either absolute, relative or competitive, but throughout the course of history, within presidential campaign rhetoric and speeches, and mostly apparent in advertising and television the same notion of working hard, attainment of a prestigious job, having a wife and two children, high income and economic security comprise those tenets (Hochschild 1996). These traits were made extremely visible in American television during the 1950s and 1960s.

“The American Dream was presented daily, nightly and weekly in the happily-ever-afters of popular television series such as *The Donna Reed Show*, *Leave it to Beaver*, *Father Knows Best*, *Lassie*, etc. Images presented were virtually uni-dimensional and clear. They were of white, middle class, two-parent homes, with hard-working Christian fathers and stay-at-home moms. As with the visual images or models, each storyline was also essentially the same. Hard work, honesty, family values (although this was clearly before the coining and bastardization of the term by political conservatives of the last few years), and white houses with picket fences in suburban or rural neighborhoods are all the ingredients to assure a happy ending” (Smith 2000, 30).

This is a critical moment for the American dream as these images were projected around the world and interpolated by new populations of people who would become the subject of these constructs. This interpolation begs the question, “Who dreams this dream?” The backbone of my analysis has centered on the fact that this construct of both indicators of success and a push for a western way of achieving that success truly made an impact on Central American people because of the history of intervention and the implementation of neoliberal capitalism as it was so pervasive in every aspect of life. So, as I have outlined above we will be translating these unwritten ideals of success as coined by the American dream and turning them into concrete indicators in which we can collect data in order to observe if a decrease has occurred, which could mean less importance placed on the traditional American dream values. The five headings to be analyzed will be marital status, educational attainment, employment status, median earnings and housing tenure (titles as printed in the United State Census).

Data Analysis Part One

Shifting now into the portion of this thesis that will examine the data in connection to the larger theoretical discussion. As mentioned in the methods section this data is taken from the U.S. Census Bureau and contains information on the foreign-born population- Central America, from 2000-2016. Before this time, I am using scattered special reports from the Census Bureau. With that being said, the changes overtime are still significant and will be supported by secondary literature and interviews.

The United States Census bureau holds statistical information on special topics concerning the “foreign born” population within the United States. A foreign-born citizen is anyone not born a U.S. citizen as well as those who have become citizens by naturalization. This

means that the survey pool may include both legal and illegal foreign-born citizens, as it encompasses anyone who participates in the censuses. The census has an incredible number of special topics on the foreign-born population including total populations and naturalization percentages. For the purposes of this study, we will be narrowing that scope even more by interpreting the data for the Central American foreign-born population. The reason the Census will provide an accurate depiction of a shift in immigrant identities is due to the fact that we can observe and track the changes in statistical data on the specific indicators of the dream. While again the dream varies from person to person, using the literature we have examined and the conceptualizations put forth by scholars from various backgrounds we have narrowed down the most crucial elements of the dream and are now able to recognize them within the Census topics. As coined in the Census we will be examining five subheadings from the available years given 2006, 2009, 2012, and 2016: marital status, educational attainment, employment status, median earnings and housing tenure.

Beginning first with the ever-popularized notion of marriage being a critical component of the American dream. In the United States marriage is completely embedded in our legal and political system. In fact, being married is a guaranteed way to lower your tax liability, receive tax breaks, and receive an advantage in securing health insurance as well as social security benefits. Within the census data the sample group is Central American foreign-born population fifteen years and over as shown in table 1. The categories are as follows: “Never married, now married (except separated), divorced or separated and widowed.” The results conclude a steady increase in the “Never married” category from 35.1% in 2006 to 36.6% in 2016, and the “Now married” section shifted from 49.7% to 48.7% over the same time frame. In a study introduced by Forbes, this information on the foreign-born population and marital status coincides with a decrease in

marriage rate within the native-born population, Forbes attributes this change to “shifting public attitudes.” This shift is critical to examine as it is occurring in both the foreign and native-born populations. It’s important to observe as well that the total foreign born Central American population grew significantly during this time frame, meaning even a small decrease is significant.

The next indicator is educational attainment (Table 2). I think this category possess some inherent biases as there is unequal access to education for immigrant populations. Within the current political arena, we have seen the measures immigrant youth have taken to make sure their education remains intact and their voices are heard. Specifically, the “Dreamers” or those who were protected under DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals). DACA was created and implemented by the Obama administration in order to help children who were brought to the United States illegally receive two year deferments and/or work permits while residing in the country. DACA is not a pathway to citizenship but rather creates a situation where children can remain in school without fear of deportation and contribute to society. In order to be included in DACA you had to meet specific vetting requirements. One of the requirements for minors applying for DACA is current enrollment in school or have successfully graduated (Consideration of deferred 2018). It is a little tricky seeing as fear of deportation had halted students from trying to attend school, or lack of proper documents has kept students out of college in the first place. With this issue of college acceptance plaguing illegal immigrant children, we have seen specific states better address this situation and others completely neglected these students. Arizona for example, does not allow in-state tuition for illegal immigrant students even if they have lived in the state their entire lives, pay taxes to that state and have gone all the way through Arizona public schooling. So, as we can see in the table,

educational attainment stays pretty low and pretty consistent throughout the early 2000s. I believe the subsequent interviews will prove useful for this category.

Employment status is our next indicator and I have chosen to combine it with median income (closely related). With a good job (with a median salary) would surely come economic security granting access to the “finer things in life” as prescribed by the dream. This section of data from the census did show growth in both the median incomes for males and females. For this topic, we also had access to a special report from 1996 on the median income level which allowed us to examine this increase over a longer duration of time. This section calls our attention back to the literature review section on millennial capitalism and how the current generation of both native and foreign-born youths are changing the way we secure jobs and the ways in which they go about earning money. Financial security is something that is intrinsic to the dream, as it offers freedom, but at what level of income grants this freedom and what level of importance is placed on income by the various generations of immigrant? This aspect of the dream will be discussed within the interviews and will reveal itself in the very rhetoric of those interviewed. Income according to millennial capitalism discourse has also become bound up with the ability to properly turn yourself into human capital in order to access power as a labor class. Navigating a world where you are expendable and replaceable due to the work you are able to provide is an interesting point of interest in the current generation.

The last indicator which has proven to be the most substantial piece of the dream within the data and the literature, is housing tenure. Within the data, housing tenure showed a significant decrease between 2006 and 2016 and an even greater decrease from the 1980s or before to present (there was a special census report that provided this information). Home ownership was at a high of 67% of Central Americans owning their home during the 1980s or

earlier. By the 2000s that number was down to just 18% of Central Americans owning their home. This is a significant finding as home ownership went down almost 50% in this specific group of people. Taking a look at the recent data given in the Census surveys we see that a greater number of Central Americans are shying away from purchasing houses and instead at a high of 64.6% of the population in the United States renting their homes. Owning a home in this country, as we have come to find in the literature, is a way immigrants have begun to assimilate. An important moment to touch on that is surely represented in this data is the 2008-2010 housing crisis. Immigrants were easy targets during the years leading up to the crisis as they were especially vulnerable to subprime lending and harassment due to their lack of English skills or legal status. Many of the foreclosures during this time were in predominantly immigrant neighborhoods (Lee 2008). Having been victimized by the economy it's easy to see why perhaps newer generations of immigrants or children of immigrants are more apprehensive when purchasing real estate. I think this indicator is the most telling of the shift in the American dream, and it does offer us the most in depth range of data. Moving into our next section of data analysis (the interviews) will allow us to corroborate these numbers with real human accounts of identity and shifting desires.

Data Analysis Part Two

For the second half of the data analysis, interviews were conducted with four immigrants from various countries in Latin America. Each of these subjects were interviewed in order to sample a unique perspective on the American Dream across multiple generations of immigrants. These interviews encapsulate some of the larger unseen explanations of the data in the first section. Numbers and statistics greatly aid in drawing conclusions about particular groups of

people, but the qualitative research is needed to dive further into the humanistic side of the data. These four in-depth interviews followed a rather loose interview guide, for the purposes of this study, personal narratives were more important than a strict guideline of questions, therefore the interviews all took on a natural conversation-like structure. For this reason, as well, the names and identifying information of these four subjects are not necessary, what is necessary is age of the interviewees. The researcher sampled two immigrants who represent the identity of the youth at the age of 25 (one male and one female) and two immigrants who represented early immigration at the ages of 76 and 74 (male and female). Each of these people had a unique experience coming to United States and each had a differing opinion on the American dream and the indicators as discussed in the first section.

Interview #1:

Conducted March 20, 2018

The first interview conducted was with the 25-year-old female who immigrated to the United States when she was 10. Her interview proved to explore the varying opinions of the American dream between her, her mother and father as well as the greater American influence she felt was prevalent in her home country growing up. She explained how much easier her immigration experience may have been compared to others due to her “privilege” which she brought up multiple times. When asked what she meant, she shed light on the network of family she already had in the United States, as well as the high economic class her family was “lucky enough” to hold. In the first data section, educational attainment was an indicator where we observed little fluctuation in the achievement of higher education. In the interview, education was a topic that was heavily explored. The subject explained that she attended a private school while in her home country, which she felt greatly affected the level of success she was able to

achieve in America. She remembered the teachers in the United States giving her a hard time because of her English skills and not allowing her to use the mathematical methods she learned in Latin America even though they produced the correct answers. The subject has since gone on to earn her master's degree in International Studies, but definitely feels she rose above the adversity she felt in school growing up.

"I was hit hard with the American Bravado." A statement that emerged when discussing the extreme patriotism that was "In your face" during her early schooling years. Having to recite the "Pledge of Allegiance" every day and sing "America the Beautiful" took up about fifteen minutes of school in the morning, something she vividly remembers. The American dream is pervasive, penetrating the world via television, advertisements and malls. The interviewee was asked about any characters or television shows she could remember from her childhood and immediately she remembered American television always on in her household and American movies always spotlighted at the local theater. America was very much a present force in her country, with military intervention prevalent at the time the U.S. was revered as the "Land of opportunity." She asserted that her generation was definitely more American and integrated with the American culture because it was everywhere. Barbies, Monopoly, and Hershey's were just some of the products she remembers. These products eventually multiplied when the first mall in her country opened up right behind her family's apartment in the early 2000s. The mall not only functioned as a source of American goods and consumption for her town, it was also the main communal space where exercise and church services took place. This capitalist manifestation was also a space for identity.

As the interview progressed the subject was asked to define the American dream in her own words. After collecting her thoughts and going back and forth on some ideas she arrived at a

definition, but made sure to make note that the dream is different for everyone. But for her, the dream is not physical or solid, but the ability to be comfortable in life, having to work really hard, achieving personal independence through self-sufficiency and contributing something to society (which she clarified as work or human capital). She quickly made a point to comment on the fact that this definition would not be the same as her dad's. "He would say the American dream is capitalism and capitalism is the American dream," she further asserted that his definition, to her, is antiquated, "White picket fences and a home."

The next point she made really stuck out, as the research from the first data section was most telling in the "Housing Tenure" subheading. This "new immigrant" is less concerned with the physical attributes of the dream (according to this subject) and more focused on education and personal growth in other ways. Her mother's definition of the dream was a topic I asked her to further explore. This brought up a somber response as she believes her mother had and continues to have the hardest time in this country. She explained how her mother's English will never quite be up to par and how she did not have the connections to this country like her father did. Her definition of the American dream is one that truly encapsulated the identity of so many mothers in the United States, both foreign and native born, which is the ability to give your children a better life.

Interview #2:

Conducted April 4, 2018

Interview number two was with the male 25-year-old male. This interview proved to be very different than his female counterpart, as the subject had very clear and easy-going opinions on the topic at hand. Having been born in the United States (a major difference from the first interviewee), his mother had immigrated to the country and earned her visa in 1986 where she

subsequently gave birth to the interviewee. She met the soon to be father of her second child whom she followed back to her home country in Latin America until he became abusive forcing her to make the journey back to the United States. The interviewee was therefore taken back to the United States when he was 6 years old. He first arrived in Los Angeles because his mother had a network of support there, they later moved to Northern California where the subject grew up and attended school.

After inquiring about his upbringing and the challenges he faced on the actual journey to the United States, a line of questions were asked about his schooling experience. English language acquisition was his biggest challenge, he told me he had a friend that would translate everything for him, and was in the “English as a second language” program up until sixth grade. He recalled that he never felt that he wasn’t given the same opportunities in school, that the schools he attended did not hinder his learning but rather his mother and family never forced him to focus on education. “Their entire lives they were just focused on working, on earning, so I felt like they never really cared how much I applied myself” he recalled about his childhood. While he did agree that initially he felt like some of his opportunities in this country were limited due to his first-generation status, he believes that gave him the work ethic and drive to achieve all that he wants to now. He feels strongly that he is capable of attaining any and all of his dreams. When asked about the representation of the U.S. in Latin America when he was growing up he had little recollection of any American television shows or characters (seeing as he was only a young boy) but he made a point to bring up the brands that he was already well acquainted with. Walmart and McDonald’s were two brands that he distinctly remembered already making their way into his city.

With this sentiment, the next set of questions we went into were about his definition of the American dream. Quickly, he asserted “Happiness.” When asked to elaborate he said, “To be content with where you are, but that there is always room for improvement. It’s a mental emancipation.” His answer greatly differed from the other interviews conducted but also heavily tied in with the first, as the dream is not something physical or solid, but something you find internally. He was then asked if his mother would have the same response, he responded with probably not, he felt she would probably feel some regret when asked that question, that she was not able to give her children as much as she wanted to, meaning the dream to her is the ability to provide a better life and opportunity for her kids. His interview overall proved to be one of positivity and reassurance in the dream. It was a unique take on the immigrant experience and identity which aided most in confirming that it is still a pervasive idea.

Interview #3 and #4:

Conducted April 1, 2018

The final two interviews were conducted with a husband and wife ages 76 and 74. They both immigrated to the United States at the age of 13, separately, and met in San Francisco later in life. This pair offered a special perspective on the American dream as they both seemed to have successfully achieved it, without fully acknowledging it. Starting first with the husband, his journey to the United States was motivated by the health services that were available, as he was born with Polio. Having an aunt in San Francisco with accessibility to the Shriners hospital, she was able to petition and grant access to his stay in the U.S., he was then admitted to the hospital in order to receive treatment and operations at the age of 13. It was in the hospital (where he stayed for a year and a half) that he learned English and had all of his initial

interactions within the country. His wife had somewhat of a similar situation where her motivation was predicated on something out of her control. Her father had left her and her mother when she was nine months old to make money and a life in the United States. Her mother was never going to leave her parents behind to fend for themselves so she remained in their country. When the interviewee turns thirteen her father called her and requested she come live with him. So, she came by herself to the United States, flying into the San Francisco Airport. She recalls being overwhelmed in the airport but that her first interactions in the country were positive as she was able to meet her dad for the first time and her new step mom. The first store her dad took her to was Sears and she, “Never felt weird or uncomfortable” as a child in a new country. Both of the subjects had established networks of support in the United States which they agreed made the transition much smoother.

Having both lived out the majority of their childhoods predominantly in Latin America, I asked them about the representation of the U.S. in their home countries. Televisions was not accessible in their country yet; radio broadcasting was popular and still at the local level. However, they both vividly remember the American movies that played at their local theater. Cowboys, Humphrey Bogart and images of the family around a table in their home portrayed a seemingly perfect life, which stuck out to them as children (American movies with Spanish subtitles). When I asked them to give their thoughts on the American dream or a definition, they both seemed rather unconcerned, “I didn’t really perceive the American dream to be much as a kid” the wife chimed in.

They both pinpointed the moment the American dream became a conscious idea to them, during the 1950s and 60s. The husband attended San Francisco State University and Boalt Hall (University of California Berkeley) for law school and is today a sole practitioner specializing in

immigration law and criminal defense. As he continued telling me his story I couldn't help but think this man had achieved the American dream in its most traditional sense. However, his definition and notions of the dream were mainly focused on how the conditions for immigrants have changed over time. He made several interesting points where he confidently asserted that the American dream was easier to achieve when he was a young adult, compared to the immigrant generation now. Jobs in the service industry during this time offered you a salary that could sustain your life, that would allow you to buy a house, he specified. Owning a home was clearly something of importance as he painted it as a marker of success that has become harder over generations in this country.

They both thought back on the extreme disparities they saw take shape around them during their young adult lives. They felt the tension between classes begin to grow and exacerbated racism they never could have imagined would be so prevalent. The husband brought up the American movies from his childhood and how that perfect image of a family around a table, "Was always of white people, typically with a black servant." The movies painted a calm picture, that this image displayed was the norm (an acceptable and respectful norm). They came to this country and realized this was not the case. They both credited Cesar Chavez for paving the way to better treatment of immigrants and people of color. The American dream up until this point, to both of them, felt almost "Nightmarish" and gave them "A great deal of disappointment."

They both hit on the fact that income disparity in this country is something that has become outrageous along with the increase in education costs, leading them to believe that it is much harder for immigrants now. The housing market is volatile and confusing for immigrants now, the wife asserted. After asking if they both owned the house they live in, she replied yes

that they purchased it in 1972 for \$30,000 dollars, which she claimed was a big purchase at the time but that it, “Still wasn’t as hard as it is now.” The interesting elements of this interview surrounded the fact these two did not seem worried about their own personal journey within the constructs of the American dream, that in fact they almost don’t believe it existed in their lives. When I heard their story, it was fascinating that they almost fully achieved the American dream as defined in previous chapters. Marriage/family, educational attainment, economic security and housing tenure, all things encapsulating the dream. While not present in their minds, the dream constructs still felt present.

These four interviews allow us to translate some of the ambiguous statistics represented in the first data section. Where we can observe shifts via the Census Bureau tables, interviewing these four people paints a larger picture of immigrant identity as it comes to us first hand. Here we can analyze not only the numbers but the humanistic and emotional side of this topic. We were granted access inside the greater reasoning behind immigration and the various layers of U.S influence as well as shifting factors of the American dream. The larger significance of these interviews is found in the differences between all four. How generationally we are seeing a shift in attitudes and identity as subtle as the very definition each interviewee gave. Each interview was a crucial component to assessing the changes tracked throughout the years given in the data sets. For example, interview one discussing the earliest infiltrations of U.S products and malls within her country, how she was exposed to capitalism so early on and that her father’s definition truly aligns with that ideology. Or interviews three and four and their amazing stories of success in this country, but their wariness for current generations of immigrants. Using both data sections

we are able to tease out the larger implications of the American dream and draw conclusions about its influence on immigrant identities.

Conclusion

Arriving at the conclusion of this thesis, the research and work proposed has brought about many explanations for the topic at hand and also allows us to observe where further research can be extended. This thesis could have gone a multitude of ways with any of the key terms being at the forefront. Migration, identity politics, and consumption, all terms with a plethora of scholarship surrounding them, I arrived at my niche because I wanted to fill the gap between the spaces of all three. Migration is so often observed at the surface level and in turn policy does not encapsulate nearly enough to make real change. Along with the contemporary problems of migration we have observed that neoliberal capitalism and U.S. intervention in Central America has been a contributing factor in the formation of immigrant identities. Throughout history we have seen the lasting legacy of U.S. intervention in Central America as unstable governments, violence and corruption are key driving forces of out-migration to the United States. The infiltration of the American dream as stipulated in the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity and the Alliance for Progress as well as the massive expansion of consumerism and U.S. economic hegemony across Latin America is another influence on immigration identity, as we have come to find.

These larger historical processes have contributed to a shift in a group centered ideology to one of individualized success stories and personal growth. This is visible in the term coined by the Comaroffs, millennial capitalism. In the new millennium we have seen a decline in the overall importance of the traditional narrative of the American dream and a rejection of tradition

markers of success. While immigrant's identities are surely changing because of these elements, it has been an important find that the American dream itself has begun to shift. Statistically, we have seen a decline in the components of the dream such as marital status, educational attainment and most importantly housing tenure. In the interviews, we found that the dream for older generations of immigrants is still one of concrete value and perhaps not consciously thought of as much but still very pervasive. While to younger generations of immigrants the dream is less concrete and more ideological and internal. These findings along with the statistical changes charted in the first data section are significant because they call on us as a scholarly community to better understand the multifaceted and complexity of the immigrant subject. To shift our attention away from the standard causes of migration and look at an all-encompassing origin of these larger circumstances.

In a broader sense, the research presented in this thesis is an attempt to bridge several contributing factors of migration together in order to show the reader just how complex this issue is. There is no one institution or actors at fault nor is there one solution for remedying the larger crisis of mass-migration. The research integrated in this thesis begins a dialogue that must be continued. The alliances analyzed in the discourse chapter are only two in a pool of several negotiations between the United States and Central America. Further exploration of the discourse between these two regions and the implanted idea of the American dream could be extended much further. Identity is very much a multifaceted topic, where I begin to draw connections between identity, consumerism and migration, more could be done to address the layers of that identity. The indicators of the American dream and the data pulled from the Census Bureau could be deepened. With an emphasis on finding larger datasets and interviewing more immigrants from Central America a great picture could be painted. This thesis presents an

opportunity for more in-depth focuses on any of the topics at hand including, neoliberal capitalism and the politics of consumption, U.S. economic hegemony and the American dream facade. What I have strived to achieve is a culmination of all of those topics in order to observe the large issue of migration from a unique and perplexing lens. With this point of view perhaps we may look to the future of migration policy to addresses the deeper embedded sources of out-migration and move away from surface level solutions.

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Appendix

DATA TABLES (U.S. Census Bureau Data, Citations in Bibliography)

Table 1:				
Marital Status	2006	2009	2012	2016
Never Married	35.1	36.7	36.8	36.6
Now married, except separated	49.7	48.8	47.9	48.7
Divorced or Separated	12.1	11.5	12.1	11.5
Widowed	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.2
Table 2:				
Educational Attainment	2006	2009	2012	2016
Less than high school graduate	48.4	50	48.1	48.5
High School graduate	25.9	23.8	24.8	25.6
Some college or associate's degree	15.5	16.8	17.2	16.6
Bachelor's Degree	7.3	6.9	7.3	6.7
Graduate or professional degree	2.8	2.5	2.7	2.7
Table 3				
Employment Status	2006	2009	2012	2016
In labor force	76.3	77.7	75.8	73.8
Employed	71.5	68.9	68.7	69.9
Unemployed	4.7	8.6	7	3.8
Table 4				
Median Earnings	2006	2009	2012	2016
Male	25,627	25,711	26,971	30,704

Female	21,003	21,811	23,039	25,839
Table 5				
Housing Tenure	2006	2009	2012	2016
Owner-occupied housing	43.1	40.3	36.9	35.4
Renter-occupied housing	56.9	59.7	63.1	64.6
Average household size (#)	4.07	4.31	4.24	4.17

Special Reports				
Home ownership rate of foreign-born households by period of entry and world region	Before 1980	1980 to 1989	1990 to 1999	2000 or later
Central America	67	55	38	18
Central America (Other) (Includes Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama)	57	51	37	14